

### **A purple hairstreak down at ground level**

Although reputedly the most widespread and abundant of the hairstreaks, at least in the London area, this butterfly remains particularly elusive, partly because of its high-flying habits. I was pleased, therefore, to be able to photograph this delightful butterfly at close quarters when it finally came down to earth.

On 1 July 1999, I was part of a small team surveying a steep wooded railway embankment at Ealing Broadway, Middlesex (grid reference TQ 186810, VC 21), for London Underground. Just as we were about to leave the site, a small grey butterfly fluttered down and landed briefly on a colleague's fluorescent orange, high-visibility jacket. It was a purple hairstreak. Within a few seconds, it had fluttered off and landed on the gravel ballast of the adjacent track. Although it was only a few inches from the rails, I managed to take a few photographs. It was remarkably camouflaged against the grey granite ballast. It remained settled for several minutes, and was not disturbed by a train passing virtually above it. Eventually, after a few more minutes, the butterfly took off and disappeared over the tops of the small oak trees growing up the embankment.

The weather was overcast and blustery, but not cold, so I found this close encounter very strange.— RICHARD A. JONES, 135 Friern Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 0AZ (E-mail: bugmanjones@hotmail.com).

### **Red-necked Footman *Atolmis rubricollis* (L.) (Lep.: Arctiidae) in Lancashire**

The year 2000 was memorable for many species of migrant moth rarely seen this far north, but one night in particular stood head-and-shoulders above the rest. Permission had been obtained, from the Sefton Council Coastal Ranger Service, to study Lepidoptera on the Formby sand dune system and, on 19 June 2000, a small group of members of the Lancashire Moth Group ventured forth primarily to check for the presence of some of the less common inhabitants of this threatened habitat.

As it transpired we had, by pure coincidence, picked probably the best night for migration into or through the county during 2000. Ray Banks, Hannah Barlow, Graham Jones, Paul Pugh and myself set up our lights at about 10 pm, bathing quite a large area of the southern dunes in an eerie blue-white glow, and within a short period of time moths were being attracted to the traps and sheets in considerable numbers. The resident species were well-represented including large numbers (in excess of forty each) of the commoner Hawk-moths such as Eyed *Smerinthus ocellata* (L.), Elephant *Deilephila elpenor* (L.) and Small Elephant *D. porcellus* (L.), plus a few Lime *Mimas tiliae* (L.). Also apparent were considerable numbers of the Diamond-back Moth *Plutella xylostella* (L.), later estimated to be in excess of 500, and smaller numbers of Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella* (D. & S.) and Rusty-dot Pearl *Udea ferrugalis* (Hb.).